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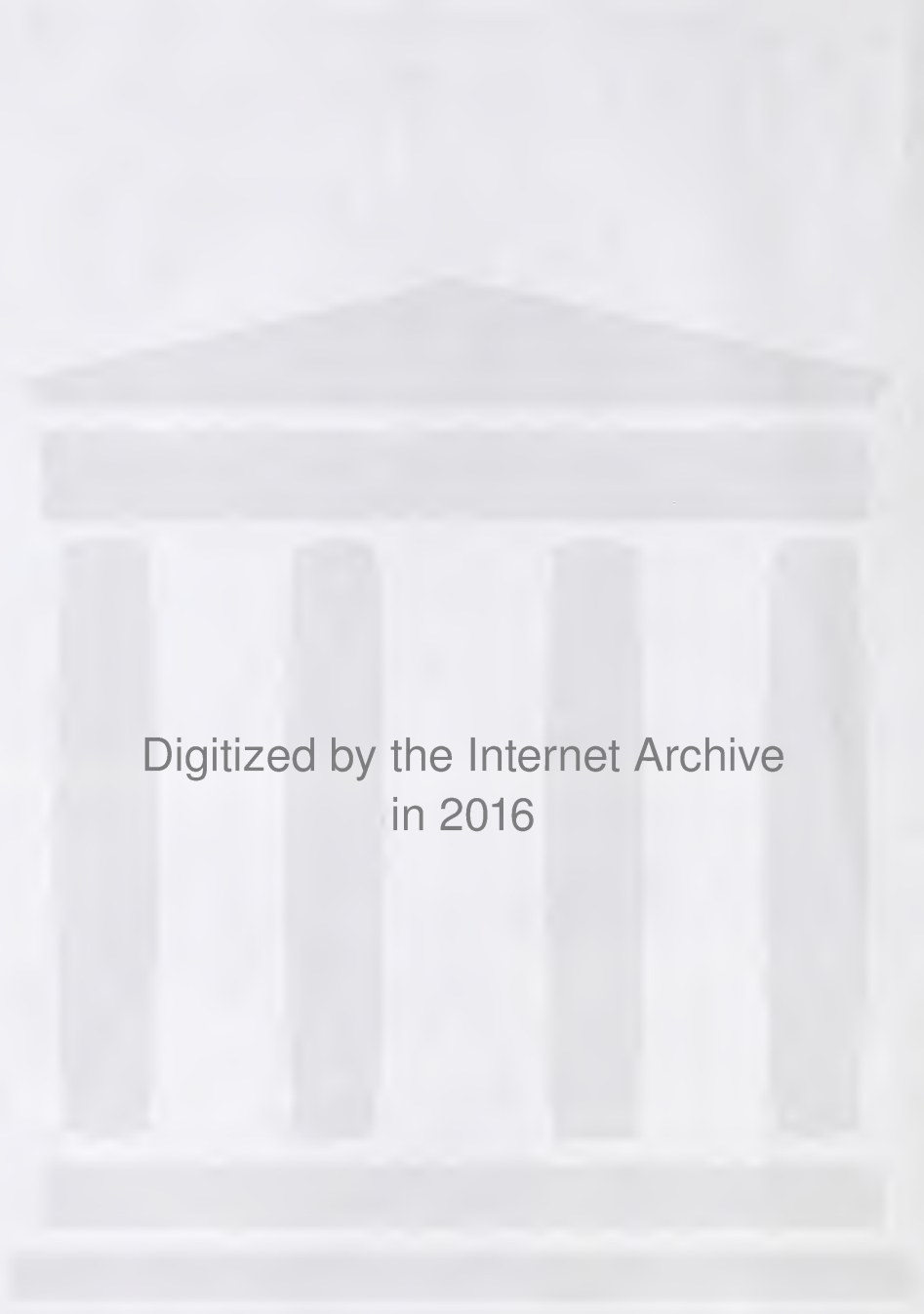
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# Current Literature



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# Abraham Lincoln in Story\*

There have been numberless volumes written on the life of Abraham Lincoln, but none heretofore has been devoted exclusively to narratives and anecdotes of our first martyr president. This fertile field Mr. Silas G. Pratt has entered in his *Lincoln in Story*, which is made up entirely of authenticated anecdotes.

If any one virtue ranked higher than another in Lincoln's estimation it was that of honesty. "Honest Old Abe" was the campaign slogan that finally placed him in the president's chair. From his first entrance into politics this quality was prominent.

In 1838 there was a very exciting election in Illinois, and Lincoln for the second time was chosen for the Legislature by his party (the Whigs). A number of his friends gathered together and gave him two hundred dollars to pay his expenses. After the election was over and Lincoln had been successful, he handed back to his friend, Mr. Speed, the sum of one hundred and ninety-nine dollars and twenty-five cents with the request that he give it back to those who had given it to him. He said: "I did not need the money; I made the canvass on my own horse; my entertainment (board) being at the home of friends, cost nothing; and my only outlay was seventy-five cents for a barrel of cider which some farm laborers insisted I should treat them to!"

Another incident illustrating his scrupulous honesty occurred in connection with the closing up of his affairs as postmaster of New Salem in 1833.

The balance of money in his hands which belonged to the government, was between sixteen and eighteen dollars. This small amount was overlooked by the post-office department and not called for until several years after Lincoln had removed to Springfield. During these years he had been very poor—so poor, indeed, that he had been compelled to borrow money of friends for the necessities of life. One day an agent of the post-office called at Mr. Henry's, with whom Lincoln at that time kept his office. "Knowing Lincoln's poverty," Mr. Henry afterwards related, "and how often he had been obliged to borrow money, I did not believe he had the funds on hand to meet the draft, and was about to call him aside and loan it to him, when he asked the agent to be seated a moment. He then went over to his boarding house and returned with an old blue sock with a quantity of silver and copper coin tied up in it. Untying the sock, he poured out the contents on the table and proceeded to count it, and the exact sum (and the identical coin) was found which years before he had received for postage stamps from his friends in Salem."

Lincoln's remarkable strength was noticeable even in his youth. It is said that as a boy he could carry six hundred pounds at a time. On one occasion it is related that he walked away with a couple of logs which three sturdy men could not handle. A neighbor said of him: "He could strike with a maul a heavier blow, could sink the axe deeper into the wood, than any man I ever saw."

Lincoln's humor, even in the face of great mental suffering, is a subject very dear to the heart of his countrymen. During the eventful years of the great war the newspapers of the North were not slow to criticise the president, especially after terrible defeats, like those at Bull Run, Antietam, etc. Lincoln felt keenly the slurs of the press at these times but seldom uttered any complaint.

On one occasion, however, after the New York Tribune had been particularly offensive, a noted newspaper correspondent from New York called upon Lincoln to urge some special plan of campaign. The President, weary and worn with many midnight vigils, after patiently listening to his caller, said: "Your New York papers remind me of a little story." And then throwing one of his long legs over the other, while a humorous smile played about his mouth, he continued: "Some years ago there was a gentleman traveling through Kansas on horse-back, as was the custom in those days. There were few settlements and no roads and he finally lost his way. To make matters worse, as night came on, a terrific thunderstorm suddenly arose, and peal on peal of thunder, following flashes of lightning, shook the earth or momentarily illuminated the scene. The terrified traveler then got off and led his horse, seeking to guide himself as best he might by the flickering light of the quick flashes of lightning. All of a sudden a tremendous crash of thunder brought the man to his knees in terror and he cried out: 'O Lord! If it's all the same to you, give us a little more light and a little less noise.'"

The building of the Monitor was due to the persistence of President Lincoln. In Ericsson's design he had from the first the greatest confidence.

During the last months of the war, a former lieutenant in a foreign army offered his services to the Union. Lincoln accepted his offer and promised him a commission. Elated at his success the young nobleman, for such he was, said in a deprecating manner: "Mr. President, in my own country my family is noble, and I bear a title of very ancient nobility. I—" Here, Mr. Lincoln, with a twinkling eye, interrupted in a reassuring manner, saying: "Oh, never mind

\**Lincoln in Story: The Life of the Martyr President Told in Authenticated Anecdotes.* By Silas G. Pratt. D. Appleton & Co., New York.

that; you will find that to be no obstacle to your advancement."

A short time before the final surrender of the Confederates, General Grant told the President that the war must soon come to an end, and asked him whether he should try to capture Jefferson Davis, the Confederate President, or let him escape from the country. Lincoln said: "That reminds me of a story. There was once an Irishman who had signed the Father Mathew's temperance pledge. A few days after he became terribly thirsty, and finally applied to a bartender in a saloon for a glass of lemonade, and while it was being mixed he leaned over and whispered to him, 'and couldn't ve put a little brandy in it all unbeknownst to meself?' He then said: "Let Davis escape all unbeknownst to yourself if you can."

Throughout the tedious conflict the faith of Abraham Lincoln remained firm. He knew that right would triumph in the end.

"I know," he said. "there is a God and that he hates injustice and slavery. I see the storm coming and I know his hand is in it. If he has a place and work for me, and I think he has, I believe I am ready.

"I am nothing, but truth is everything. I know I am right because I know that liberty is right. Christ teaches it and Christ is God. I have told them that a house divided against itself cannot stand and Christ and reason say the same and they will find it so.

"Douglas don't care whether slavery is voted up or down, but God cares and humanity cares and I care, and with God's help I shall not fail. I may not see the end, but it will come, and I shall be vindicated."

Ex-senator Dawes, of Massachusetts, speaking at Pittsfield in January, 1901, described Lincoln's personal appearance on the morning of his arrival in Washington ten days before his inauguration. He said:

I never saw a man so unkempt, so ill-looking; his hair was disheveled, his clothes were the ones he had worn on the sleeper from Springfield. He was long and angular. It seemed as though his body was made up of component parts of different bodies—as though his head was not in the right place. Rough and uncouth, he was a typical backwoodsman. But there was something incomprehensible in his face, something unfathomable.

The slow progress of the war with its many critical and bloody battles deeply affected the President and laid an habitual expression of melancholy upon his face.

The artist who painted the picture, Signing the Emancipation Proclamation, said of the President's face: "In repose it was the saddest face I ever knew. There were days when I could scarcely look on it without crying."

Mr. Joshua R. Speed, a good friend of Mr. Lincoln, while residing in Springfield, Ill., gives this account of his last interview with the Presi-

dent, which occurred in Washington about ten days prior to his second inauguration:

Congress was drawing to a close; the President had to give much attention to bills he was about to sign. The great war was at its height; visitors from all parts of the country were coming and going to the President with their complaints and grievances from morning until night with almost as much regularity as the ebb and flow of the tide and he was worn down in health and spirit.

On this day, when I entered the room, I noticed sitting near the fire-place, dressed in humble attire, two ladies modestly waiting their turn. One after another the visitors came and went, some satisfied, others displeased at the result of their mission. The hour had arrived to close the door against all further callers.

No one was left in the room except the President, the two ladies and myself. With a rather peevish and fretful air he turned to them and said: "Well, ladies, what can I do for you?" They both began speaking at once.

From what they said he soon learned that one was the wife and the other was the mother of men who had resisted the draft in western Pennsylvania.

"Stop!" said he, "don't say any more. Give me your petition." The old lady responded: "Mr. Lincoln, we've got no petition; we couldn't write one and had no money to pay for writing it and I thought best to come and see you."

"Oh," he said, "I understand your cases."

He rang his bell and ordered one of the messengers to tell General Dana to bring him the names of all the men in prison for resisting the draft in western Pennsylvania. The General soon came with the list. Lincoln then inquired if there was any difference in the changes or degrees of guilt.

The General replied that he knew of none.

"Well, then," said the President, "these fellows have suffered long enough, and I have thought so for some time, and now that my mind is on the subject, I believe I will turn out the whole flock. So draw up the order, General, and I will sign it." It was done and the General left the room.

Turning to the women, Lincoln said: "Now, ladies, you can go."

The younger of the two ran forward and was in the act of kneeling in thankfulness.

"Get up," he said, "don't kneel to me, but thank God and go."

The old lady now came forward with tears in her eyes to express her gratitude. "Good-bye, Mr. President," she said; "I shall probably never see you again 'till we meet in heaven." These were her exact words. She had the President's hand in hers and he was deeply moved.

He instantly took her right hand in both of his own and following her to the door, said: "I am afraid with all my troubles I shall never get to the resting place you speak of, but if I do, I am sure I shall find you. That you wish me to get there is, I believe, the best wish you could make for me. Good-bye."

We were now alone. I said to him: "Lincoln, with my knowledge of your nervous sensibility, it is a wonder that such scenes as this don't kill you."

He thought for a moment and then answered in a languid voice: "Yes you are to a certain

degree right. I ought not to undergo what I so often do. I am very unwell now; my feet and hands of late seem to be always cold and I ought perhaps to be in bed. But things of this sort you have just seen don't hurt me, for, to tell you the truth, that scene is the only thing to-day that has made me forget my condition or given me any pleasure. I have in that order made two people happy and alleviated the distress of many a poor

soul whom I never expect to see. That old lady," he continued, "was not counterfeit. The mother spoke out in all the features of her face. It is more than one can often say, that in doing right, one has made two people happy in one day.

"Speed, die when I may, I want it said of me by those who know me best, that I always plucked a thistle and planted a flower when I thought a flower would grow."

## F a k e s \*

By *Andrew Lang*

Many collectors, it is certain, "walk in a vain shadow." Their Greek coins and Egyptian jewels, and enameled swords are of yesterday. I once bought a gem of Antinous; the vender assured me that the British Museum acknowledged its authenticity. I did not, and when I submitted the treasures to our expert, he said, "Dix-neuvième siècle!" However, I rather think it is of the eighteenth century.

The collector must guard himself partly by actual knowledge and the pedigree of each object, and the various collections in which it has reposed, be it coin, glass, enamel, steel work, or what not; partly by a kind of tact which is born of long and expensive experience. Artists who might deceive the very elect still exist. A great collector had a box in enamel. He sent it to Vienna to be repaired. The ingenious artist fitted a new lid to the original lower part; a new lower part to the original lid, and so created two boxes, and made two collectors happy, the real owner and a new purchaser. In a similar way the gem-cutter will take a real Greek gold ring, with an unimportant subject on the stone, and will on the original stone make an intaglio of an important subject; make a turkey swallow the trinket, kill the turkey and produce the fresh intaglio with all the marks of age which attrition in the crop of the bird can produce. I fear that old works and watches—date, maker's name and all—are inserted in new enamel cases, probably Viennese, and sold to the guileless and confiding as works of the eighteenth century. Even the humble boxes of Battersea enamel are now reproduced in France and flood the market. They are all very fresh and new, and rather prettier than the originals. In the same way, missing frontispieces and title pages of books are forged.

It is a pity, I think, that the artists who make the forgeries do not work openly, on their own

account, as dealers in beautiful modern objects. But perhaps these ingenious men are "sweated" by the wicked capitalists and dealers, who vend new lamps for old. If so, why do they not blackmail their employers? Perhaps they get half profits or a royalty on their productions. Antiquarian society is in much searching of heart about a medieval sword; it would be indiscreet to enter on this mysterious topic. "A great ox hath trodden on my tongue," but I may go so far as to say that the sword is not King Arthur's blade, Escalibur. On the other hand, swords of Wallace, axes of Bruce, are quite common in Scotch collections. None, I fear, is genuine. Every Andrea Ferrara was not made in Italy, and one of Bruce's war axes did appear, to me, to be—Japanese! Lately a crowd of medieval objects in lead came on the market. They were dated in Arabic numerals, which, at the supposed time of their fashioning, were not used in Europe. That is the forger's failing. He will introduce details which were not in existence at the date when the articles were made, if genuine. For example, there were lately in the market a number of exquisite portrait medallions, in pear wood and hone stone. They represented famous people of the sixteenth century, say Luther, Erasmus and John Knox. But a collector came on sixteenth century printed engravings from these medals. This was vastly well, yet the medals differed in certain details from the engravings. How was this? The collector next discovered later editions of the engravings. The plates had been altered in these editions, and the alterations corresponded to the medallions. The medallions had been forged after the latter editions of the published forgeries. Again, a beautiful ivory coffer of the twelfth century lies before me, with effigies in relief of kings and saints, their names being inscribed. But, alas, the inscriptions, as a babe might see, are not in the lettering of the twelfth century, but much more recent.

\*The Independent.

